

Many waste prevention
and recycling tips in
this guide come from
large events.

If you are planning a
small event, conference
or even a lunch meeting,
simply adapt the
suggestions to
your situation.

Recycling Advocates
encourages you to submit
your waste prevention
tips - new ones will be
posted on its website.



Pre-Event



It is never too early to start planning waste prevention and recycling for your event.

- **Assess previous recycling and waste prevention efforts, if applicable.** (See Section 4 for waste prevention tips.)

- ✓ Has recycling occurred at the event in the past?
- ✓ What types of and how much material will be generated?
- ✓ Are there opportunities to further reduce material generated?
- ✓ What type of event is it?: Nonprofit or for profit? Casual or formal? Indoors or outdoors? Small or large? One day or multi-day?

- **Recruit and train volunteers/employees.**

Recruit or hire as many as possible, as early as possible and use them both before and during the event. Civic organizations, churches, community centers, university organizations and members or employees of sponsoring organizations can be good sources of volunteers. Most events provide free or reduced admission for volunteers and sometimes a T-shirt or a hat.

Create job descriptions for each task, such as: making signs, working with vendors and exhibitors prior to the event, obtaining sponsors and/or donations, monitoring recycling stations, sorting bins for contamination, communicating recycling information during the event, transferring recyclables from bins to collection points, and working with vendors and exhibitors at the event.

- **Hire garbage and/or recycling hauler(s).**

Work with the existing garbage/recycling hauler if you are in a franchised area or choose your own hauler if you are in a non-franchised, competitive area.

Keep the following in mind when working with a hauler:

- ✓ How are services and charges arranged?
- ✓ Has the hauler done event recycling?
- ✓ Can the hauler donate garbage and recycling containers, signage or services?
- ✓ Can the hauler provide program design assistance and education?
- ✓ Can the hauler provide statistics for garbage and recycling collected at your event?
- ✓ What are the recycling specifications for each material collected?
- ✓ What is the allowable level of contamination?
- ✓ Does the hauler have any special requirements?

Make certain the hauler knows about your event's specific needs or requirements.

Talk to your local government representative for assistance. (See Section 6 for resources.)

- **Establish a relationship with the event coordinator, site supervisor and/or janitorial staff.**

- **Make initial contact with vendors and exhibitors a few months before the event.**

Prepare an introductory letter (see sample on pages 4-5) to all prospective vendors and exhibitors explaining the benefits of recycling and the associated cost savings. Introduce the idea of recycling, what items are being targeted and ask for their cooperation. Your event can require that vendors not sell items with certain packaging if you do not want to or cannot collect it. Provide suggested alternatives to disposable serving materials, e.g. where they can buy compostable plates, silverware and cups.



SAMPLE Recycling/Waste Management Letter

Please fax back to [Event Coordinator] at [fax number] by [date].

The [name of event] is counting on you to help make this year's [event] another huge success. You can do so not only by your generous sponsorship, but also by recycling the material you generate at your booth. Events at [event site] generate a large amount of waste, and the [organizing committee] is committed to minimizing the amount going into landfills. As a company that will have on-site presence at the [event], we ask that you support our efforts to be an environmentally sensitive event.

Please review the waste disposal rules outlined below and sign in the space provided, indicating your agreement. Also, please fill out the attached On-Site Needs and Plan form. Fax both items back to the [event coordinator] at [fax number] by [date].

Please be aware that we do not have paid staff to pick up garbage and recycling. It is imperative that you or the people who are distributing your items at the [event] take your garbage and recyclables to the designated receptacles at [location]. Many of you will be making generous donations of material goods to participants. If, at the end of the event, you have left over materials, please be prepared to take these items with you at the end of the day.

On the day of the [event], please have your staff do the following:

❶ Recycle* the following items (if they are in use at your booth):

- ✓ Cardboard ✓ Mixed Paper
- ✓ Plastic Bottles ✓ Juice Boxes
- ✓ Plastic Bags

*Flatten cardboard and stack neatly. Sort other materials and place in [container type] that will be provided by a recycling volunteer.

❷ Clean your booth area completely and take all garbage and recycling to the [drop box location]. Please do not leave any material at your booth.

❸ Take all unopened food and drink to the drop boxes located [drop box location]. Event volunteers will donate it to a shelter.

On the day of the [event] a recycling volunteer will visit your station at which time you can request plastic bags for recyclable materials.

You will be contacted by [recycling coordinator] to discuss your individual disposal needs and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to contact [recycling coordinator] directly, please call [him/her] at [phone number].

Thank you for your support.

Vendor Signature

Vendor Company

On-Site Needs and Plan

Please return to [event coordinator] by [date].

Vendor Company: _____

Contact Person: _____

Contact Phone: _____

Fax: _____ Email: _____

Please describe any items you plan to distribute at your booth:

Will your booth operations or items you give away generate any packaging/garbage (plastic wrappers, foil bottle caps, etc.)? Please describe (this will allow us to be prepared in our recycling efforts):

Please describe any needs you have on the day of the event (power, tables, chairs, etc.):

What else do you plan to do/have at your booth? Describe anything else you plan to bring (prizewheels, inflatables, vehicles, etc.):

[Name(s)] at [phone number] will be your contact for booth set-up and on-site logistical needs.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP
in making the [event] a great event. See you on [date].



- **Publicize the event.**

All event information and publicity should include the importance of recycling and waste reduction. Reuse paper or use recycled-content paper, poster board, etc. for as many event materials as possible, and design with reuse in mind. Using the smallest size paper possible saves resources and printing costs.

- **Create a recycling and waste prevention event plan, including:**

- ✓ Check list with due dates.
- ✓ Maps with receptacle sites and signage locations. *(See Section 4 for details.)*
- ✓ Event contacts and contact information.
- ✓ Volunteer/employee tasks and shifts.

During Event

- **Set up recycling containers and stations the day before the event, if possible.**

If not, arrive early the day of the event to do so. This will allow you to focus on directing the volunteers and collecting the recycling and trash during the event. Make sure you have adequate signage identifying the recycling stations and containers. *(See Section 4 for details.)*

- **Connect with vendors and exhibitors during set up.**

Greet vendors and exhibitors at the beginning of the event with clearly written instructions about the recycling process including who is responsible for collec-

tion and how they can contact someone if they have questions. The person distributing the information should be able to answer questions or quickly find answers.



- **Promote recycling at the event using banners at entrance and registration areas, signs on garbage and recycling containers, statements in programs, and public address announcements.**

- **The recycling coordinators and volunteers/employees should be easy to identify, e.g. wearing a hat, vest, T-shirt, apron, etc.**

- **If it is a large event, use walkie-talkies to communicate with the recycling coordinators, key volunteers and event organizers.**

- **Design a central collection area where the drop boxes or dumpsters are staged.**

This area can serve as a place for volunteers to check in, to sort materials if needed, and provide a way to observe the material flow. Someone should be stationed here throughout the event.

- **Monitor all garbage and recycling containers using volunteers/employees.**

Volunteers/employees should understand where all materials should be placed and proper recycling procedures. They can act as information resources as well. Keep sites well maintained.

- **Use hand trucks or “gators” (mini-trucks) to transport material from the recycling stations to the central collection area.**

- **Tear down and clean up.**

Remember that materials are still generated during the clean-up process. Assist vendors with tear down. If you are using an outside hauler, confirm that recycling and garbage have been picked up.



Post-Event

- Ask for feedback and suggestions from everyone involved in the event including organizers, volunteers, vendors, exhibitors and haulers.

- Follow up with the hauler/recycler for final weights on the amount of collected recyclables and garbage.

Calculate your recycling rate using the following formula:

Amount recycled / (Amount recycled + Amount Disposed)= Recycling Rate; e.g., if an event recycled 5,000 pounds of material and disposed of 3,000 pounds of material, the recycling rate would be 62.5% $(5,000 / (5,000 + 3,000) = 62.5)$.

- Publicize the recycling rate along with the results of waste prevention efforts.

- Thank your donors, sponsors and volunteers with notes or a post-event celebration. Share recycling rates and waste prevention results with them.



Waste Prevention

Waste prevention involves making decisions before your event about what actions will generate the least amount of waste. Eliminating waste means you don't have to recycle or collect it. Time and money spent on waste reduction planning can provide significant long-term benefits and financial savings. There are many ways to prevent waste.

1 Reduce Packaging and Throw-Aways

- ✓ Eliminate packaging: Offer foods that do not require more than a paper napkin to serve. Edible containers include ice cream cones, tortillas, pocket bread, burger and hot dog buns, hollowed out hard rolls, whole fruit and vegetables.
- ✓ Buy in bulk: Avoid individually packaged products. Serve beverages and food from bulk containers. For example, soft drinks on tap served in reusable cups will eliminate the need to recycle bottles and cans.
- ✓ Use refillable or reusable containers: Washable permanent ware can be rented or purchased for reuse. Participants often appreciate commemorative mugs and glasses - provide recovery bins for those who do not wish to take them home. A drink vendor could establish a deposit system and reuse cups. Conference programs could notify participants that disposable cups will not be provided.
- ✓ Reuse decorations and props: Use durable decorations and signs that can be used again and again. Make your own or consider renting or borrowing.
- ✓ Consider cloth napkins.
- ✓ Use recyclable containers and avoid plastic: Glass, aluminum and tin containers are the best choices because they are easily recycled. If plastic is the only option, choose one accepted for recycling in your area.





- ✓ Try compostable containers: Molded paper containers, cups and plates can be composted in some localities. Even if composting is not an option, molded paper will biodegrade in landfills more quickly than plastic.
- ✓ Fiber based fuel processing: As a last resort alternative to landfill, in some localities, food contaminated plastic and paper may be collected for fiber based fuel processing.
- ✓ Close the loop: Buy supplies with recycled content such as cups and napkins, or low environmental impacts such as non-toxic cleaners.

② Collect Food Waste (Organics)

- ✓ Food waste often is one of the largest types of waste at events. Consider composting organic waste including coffee grounds with filters, teabags, fruit and vegetable rinds and paper contaminated with food residue.
- ✓ For multi-day events, make arrangements for daily organics collection. For one-day events, you may be able to use a single large container to collect and transport the compost. Give each vendor a five-gallon container with lid (easily obtained for free from restaurants) for food scraps, as larger containers may be too heavy and bulky to move or replace easily.
- ✓ For smaller events, identify event volunteers to take food scraps home for their compost or worm bin. Events generating larger amounts of food scraps can deliver organics to local farmers, community gardens or large institutions with existing composting programs.



③ Maximize Collection and Reduce Contamination of Recyclables

A greater amount of uncontaminated recyclables can be collected with strategic placement of signs and receptacles.

SAMPLE RECYCLING STATION



Recycling Station includes equal numbers of recycling and trash containers. Sign should be easily visible.

- ✓ Place recycling/composting and trash receptacles together; there should never be a trash area without a recycling option. This will reduce contamination and increase the volume of recyclables collected. Limit the number of recycling stations to allow for ease of monitoring.
- ✓ Recycling locations should be highly visible. (eg. a flag on a tall pole, balloons, signs, etc.) Recycling bins are most successful when placed near a stage or attraction, restrooms, food stalls, entrances, exits and other well traveled areas. Convenient and easy to service recycling stations encourage high participation by attendees and quicker emptying by volunteers/employees.



- ✓ Use recycling bins that are visually different from other waste receptacles.
- ✓ The recycling containers must be well labeled with clear, large and specific wording. The signage should be placed at eye level. If feasible, attach a physical sample of the materials acceptable for that particular container.
- ✓ Use clear plastic bags as liners for recycling bins. This allows for identification and removal of contaminants. Putting garbage in opaque black bags makes it visibly distinct from recyclables.
- ✓ Staff all of the recycling locations to provide information and remove contaminants. If volunteers/employees are not available for all locations, then assign a volunteer “floater” to check each area periodically.

Success Stories

(Oregon events unless otherwise noted)

The 2000 Komen Portland Race for the Cure® had over 40,000 participants and 1,200 volunteers gather for this half-day event to raise awareness and over \$1.5 million dollars to fight breast cancer. For the past six years the Race has been recycling a variety of materials achieving a 59.4 percent recycling rate in 2000. This accounted for over 8,200 pounds of recyclable materials collected. Recycling stations were staffed with volunteers to limit the contamination of materials. The recycling and garbage stations were concentrated in only eight areas around the event, which allowed for greater efficiency of collection and reduced the demands on volunteers. Leftover food and give-away items were donated to

nonprofit organizations. Promoting recycling at the Race occurs through the Race website (www.raceforthecure-pdx.org), the registration brochure, visible signs placed around the event, and public announcements. For more information, contact Robin Hawley, Office of Sustainable Development, Solid Waste and Recycling, 503-823-7037.

The 2000 Lane County Fair had a centralized food pavilion with over twenty booths serving a variety of foods. Fairgoers had the opportunity to scrape their plates into bright yellow containers lined with a biodegradable plastic bag. Food scraps were transported to an in-vessel composter located on site where they were mixed with wood shavings. Approximately 4,000 pounds of food scraps were composted in the Earth Tub composter. Twenty-five containers for plastic bottle recycling (PETE’s Big Bin) were scattered throughout the Fairgrounds in addition to five recycling kiosks located at entrances. For additional information, contact Alex Cuyler, City of Eugene Solid Waste and Recycling Program, 541-682-6830.

During the *2000 season of concerts* at the Cuthbert Amphitheater in Eugene, concertgoers participated in a unique waste prevention project involving the composting of beverage cups. This facility is City owned and operated. The beverage concession manager worked with the City’s Solid Waste and Recycling Program to purchase cups from BioCorp, a manufacturer of biodegradable foodware. Cups were collected at kiosks scattered throughout the amphitheater. Each kiosk consisted of a garbage can, a plastic bottle collection container (PETE’s Big Bin), and a yellow container with a special lid with a cup-sized hole. Cups were then ground in a chipper shredder and composted in backyard bins at the City’s compost demonstration site. Approximately 12 yards of cups were diverted from the five-show season. For more information, contact Alex Cuyler, City of Eugene Solid Waste and Recycling Program, 541-682-6830.



The 2001 Taste of the Nation/Chef's Night Out in Portland used durable plates that are reused each year to serve the 750 participants. Attendees also took home commemorative wine glasses. Wine bottles and corks, cardboard, plastic bottles and milk cartons were recycled, and coffee grounds were composted. St. Vincent DePaul Food Train picked up the leftover food for distribution to low-income Oregonians. For more information, contact Tanya Schaefer at 503-238-6887 or tk@hevanet.com.

The 1997 Mt. Hood Jazz Festival in Gresham recycled cardboard, glass, plastic bottles and newspaper. Large 3-5 gallon tubs were given away. Recycling since 1995, this event uses large tables for sorting with portable sinks and running water. The event annually hosts more than 30,000. They generated 13-14 tons of garbage and 6 tons of recycling for a savings of over \$1,000 through recycling. They have a very well organized recruitment of 30 to 40 volunteers. All volunteers receive free admission, T-shirts, food drinks and a massage. For more information, contact Patricia Haring at 503-249-5644 x226.

The Cherry Creek Arts Festival in Denver, Colorado, has been on the cutting edge of waste prevention for years. The festival consistently reaches a 90% recovery rate, with attendance of over 300,000. The festival received the "Best Environmental Program" award three years in a row from the International Festival and Events Association, and was recently named Colorado's Recycler of the Year. In addition to recycling, the festival incorporates public education into many activities. For more information, contact Cherry Creek Arts Festival, P.O. Box 6265, Denver CO 80206; 303-355-2787; management@cherryarts.org; or visit www.cherryarts.org.

Resources



Located in Portland, Oregon metropolitan area unless otherwise noted.

BioCorp USA, Inc.

888-206-5658 or www.biocorpusa.com

A California company that sells compostable plates, cups, utensils, garbage and recycling bags.

Community Environmental Services

503-725-8448

Provides free recycling assistance to events within the City of Portland.

Enviro-Ware

888-233-7857 or www.envirobrands.com

A Utah company that sells biodegradable dinnerware and packaging.

Hands on Portland

503-234-3581 or www.handsonportland.org

Partners with nonprofit groups at no cost to provide volunteers for events or ongoing needs.

Metro Recycling Information

503-234-3000 or www.metro.dst.or.us/rem/rwp/rwp.html

Provides answers to nearly all your recycling questions. Books, videos, fact sheets and pamphlets including "Recycling and Waste Prevention at Conferences & Meetings" and "Resource Guide for Food Donation."

continued



OSU Master Recycler Program

503-227-0731

A community education program which provides volunteers for events, speakers and educational booths on waste reduction, recycling, composting and a host of other recycling related topics.

Recycling Advocates

503-777-0909 or www.recyclingadvocates.org

Involves citizens in creating a sustainable future through local efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle.

S.C.R.A.P.

503-294-0769 or scrap@teleport.com

Reclaims used materials and scraps for creative reuse (low cost artistic and educational items for sale).

Volunteer Center, Portland

503-413-7787

They have many volunteers looking for community service opportunities.

Volunteer Program, State of Oregon

- Clackamas County 503-657-2123
- Multnomah County 503-731-3208
- Washington County 503-643-4360

Local Government Representatives

- Clackamas County 503-557-6363
- City of Beaverton 503-526-2665
- City of Portland,
Office of Sustainable Development 503-823-7202
- City of Troutdale 503-665-5171
- City of Milwaukie 530-786-7508
- City of Gresham and Wood Village 503-618-2656
- City of Fairview 503-665-9320
- Washington County 503-846-8609